



CITY OF TAUNTON AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

*Municipal Council Chambers
Temporary City Hall
141 Oak Street, Taunton, MA 02780*

Minutes - Regular Meeting Wednesday, February 27, 2019 at 7:00pm City Hall Break Room (Moved from Council Chambers)

Call to order at 7:08pm by Jonathan Gray

Members Present: Jonathan Gray, Carol Doherty, Katie Roberts, & Jenna Gouveia

Members Not Present: William McCaffrey, Arthur Lopes

Public Input - none.

A note on our room change

- Jonathan stated that he received a call last night from the Mayor's Chief of Staff that the Airport Commission scheduled their meeting at the same time as us, although we had our meeting posted first, and when asking about scheduling with Mayor's office prior no schedule conflict was brought up. Jonathan hopes to avoid this in future with a regular meeting date at a time that doesn't conflict. A sign was erected outside to show Ag Com had been moved to break room with arrow in the correct direction.

Introductions

- Jonathan introduced Jenna Gouveia, our new Ag Com Junior Member
- Jonathan made an introduction & welcome to Bill Napolitano, SRPEDD's Environmental Program Director who is in attendance. SRPEDD is the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District, which is Taunton's Regional Planning Agency.

Meeting with the Farm & Community Collaborative

- Jonathan had a meeting with Dee Elliot who is the Executive Director of Farm & Community Collaborative (www.farmcommunitycollaborative.org) which is a recently formed nonprofit whose goal is related to alleviating food insecurity and improving access to local farm fresh produce for underserved communities within the Gateway Cities of Southeastern Massachusetts including New Bedford, Fall River, Brockton, Taunton and surrounding communities. There is substantial opportunities to improve

food access efforts in Taunton, and Dee expressed interest in working with the Commission to work on these efforts. This was an introductory meeting for Dee to understand our efforts, and current conditions in Taunton. Jonathan shared his knowledge of the Farmers Market situation in Taunton. Dee said they may be working on funding a mobile farmers market which could serve communities in Taunton that are underserved, as well as other communities.

Meeting with Taunton Housing Authority Staff

- Jonathan met with a few members of the Taunton Housing Authority staff regarding Bristol Commons including Kim Lavigne, Anne Sullivan, and Deanna Debarros. This was another introductory meeting to offer our support in their efforts to engage residents with healthy food. The issue of the greenhouse was discussed. The staff expressed an interest in having a farmer come in to manage the greenhouse, and also offer nutrition or garden education instead of paying rent for the greenhouse. The staff also said that the community room at Bristol Commons has a small kitchen, so if there was any sort of nutrition courses that could use it, it would be available if it served the residents of Bristol Commons.

Discussion of the Commission's mission statement & 5-year work plan

- Jonathan asked if there was Major takeaways from a review of other communities' work plans. He showed the Town of Carver work plan. There was general agreement the format was good, with specific goals, tasks, and dates but that Carver is very different from Taunton so our work plan will have significant difference on actual content.
- The Commission began the creation of a preliminary draft of activities to add to a work plan. Commission members stated some broad initial goals. Goals were written down on a large white sheet of paper by Bill Napolitano. **The complete list, our 1st draft of our work plan, can be found attached to these minutes below.**

Commission outreach activities

- Jonathan said there was a need for the Ag Com to have a page on city website, email address for general inquiries, and a Facebook page to get the word out. Bill suggested that these items can be further developed in the work plan. Jonathan said he would reach out to Paul Arikian, the City's IT director, to get the webpage up.

Set next meeting date

- There was no agreement on a next meeting date. The Chair will send out a poll to see what works for commissioners.

Announcements

- The Annual Agriculture Day at the State House is Wednesday, March 27th. This is a good time for the public to interact with state lawmakers on policies related to agriculture.

Motion to adjourn at 9:07 pm. Motion passes.

See addendum below.

Taunton Agricultural Commission
DRAFT 5-year Work Plan - 1st Draft

This work plan is still in process, additional items can be added/considered.

1. Assessment of farming community -- how many, specialty, contact, APR or CH61, is this a farm friendly community?
2. What support services are needed
3. Communications plan that integrates all facets of communications
4. Should we be a Right to Farm Community?
5. Promotion of existing ag operations in Taunton (various means)
6. Ag potential of City-owned land (lease, farm, market)
7. Work with Board of Health (BOH) to review BOH regulations and look at conflicts with existing state regulations
8. Should we develop a 501(c)3 for the Ag Com?
9. Look at City policies and regulations for conflicts/inconsistencies/etc.
10. Look at zoning - is it farm friendly; where do we need change; look at Somerville's ABC's of Urban Agriculture
11. Develop an urban ag resource list to put on the Ag Com/City website
12. What can we promote or initiate to help our people/community
13. Defining agriculture and coming up with a community vision
14. Work on Branding the Ag Com
15. Work on educational workshops and direct community to services that they can utilize (soil tests, farm planning, etc.)
16. Where/when do we have a seat at the table? (e.g. development review)
17. Pursue alternative funding methods to facilitate ag land preservation
18. How do we work with the state to maximize the potential of state-owned ag land in Taunton
19. Utilize the website, create a facebook page, email address